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SOURCE

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The Lithuanian Partisan Movement

1. To cope with the serious outbreak of partisan activities in Lithuania after its recapture in WW II, the Soviets took the following measures:

   a. Two NKVD Special Purpose Units were dispatched to the country. They were the 1st Separate Special Designation Moscow Inf. Div. (Pervaya Otdel'naya Moskovskaya Strelkovaya Diviziya Osobogo Naznacheniya) and the 2nd Special Designation Div. of Operational Troops (Vtoraya Diviziya Operativnykh Voysk Osobogo Naznacheniya).

   b. In addition, the 23rd, 24th, 94th, 95th and 97th NKVD Border Guard Det.'s were also sent to Lithuania.

   c. To support the NKVD units there were regular Soviet Army units, unknown Soviet and pro-Soviet Lithuanian police units (the Lithuanian police wore dark gray uniforms), plus a group of Lithuanians known as "People's Protectors" (Narodnyye Zaschitniki).

   d. All the above units were dispersed throughout Lithuania but were mainly located in and around Vil'nyus, Kaunas, Taurage, Panevezhis, Trakay, Yurbarkas, and Shaulyay.

   e. Personnel from the above units and groups were formed into so-called "punitive detachments" (karatel'nyye otryady) for the purpose of suppressing resistance and carrying out brutal terror activities against the Lithuanians.

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f. The entire country was divided into operational sectors. Each sector was headed by a chief who was usually an NKVD representative from the USSR or occasionally an experienced military troop commander (operativnik). Of the latter, Source knew of Gen. VETROV, who commanded the 2nd Special Purpose Div. of Operational Troops
50X1 with headquarters in Vil'nyus; Gen. BYCHKOVSKY; Hero of the Soviet Union Col. MEDVEDEV; [redacted] Col. SKORODUMOV.

g. At the same time a Party organizational bureau (Org-Byuro) was formed. It was headed by M. A. SUSLOV.[1] The Org-Byuro was actually the representative organ in Lithuania of the All-Union Communist Party and was above the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Lithuania. SUSLOV was subordinate only to Moscow. His orders and directives carried absolute authority. The Org-Byuro was given unlimited powers to accomplish its mission. It organized and set the entire tempo of the forceful establishment of Communist Party control in Lithuania. It governed the ideological, economic, and political life of the country. Its mission was:

(1) Quickly to establish Soviet authority throughout the Lithuanian SSR.

(2) To organize and consolidate Party power throughout Lithuania.

(3) Quickly to liquidate any resistance by the Lithuanian people.

(4) Physically to annihilate the Lithuanian partisans.

2. The People's Commissar of Internal Affairs (NKVD) of Lithuania, (fnu) BARTASHUNAS, was given the responsibility of waging war against the so-called "banditry" in Lithuania. Several high-ranking NKVD personnel from the USSR were permanently attached to BARTASHUNAS, as well as a large headquarters of operational workers (operativnyye rabotniki). Orders for BARTASHUNAS came from the Org-Byuro via the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Lithuanian SSR.

3. For several months the above-mentioned units and groups hunted down the partisans. In the Prenay and Rudnitz forest areas Source heard that the Red Army even resorted to the use of planes and artillery. Their efforts were to no avail. The Lithuanian partisans were crafty and could not be found, mainly because they knew the forests very well.

The partisans avoided open battle with the "punitive detachments". They would engage detachments only in life or death situations. There was close contact between the Lithuanian people and the partisans. As a result, the partisans maintained good intelligence and it was impossible for the Soviets to make plans for an impending action. In this way the partisans conserved their strength and were able to take countermeasures to offset possible Soviet measures.

To get partisan prisoners was an impossibility, since partisans would commit suicide rather than be taken prisoner. This was true even when they were seriously wounded or surrounded.

NKVD leaders were unsuccessful in recruiting agents and secret cells from among the Lithuanians. Bribes of clothing, food and shoes, and other inducements were to no avail. Even deceit, threats, tortures, third-degree methods and arrests brought no results for the Soviets. Very few Lithuanians aided the NKVD and from their aid very little was known of the partisans.

4. The campaign wore on. When no results were forthcoming the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union introduced the following two measures in 1944:

a. Thousands of copies of a joint announcement by the Central Committee

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of the Communist Party, Lithuania, and the Lithuanian government, were printed and distributed to the populace. The announcement beseeched partisans to come out of hiding, surrender their arms and ammunition, and declare a complete break with the so-called "bandit movement". Those that would comply were promised "legalized personal immunity" and pardon for crimes committed against the USSR. In addition, they were promised jobs and Soviet documents.

b. The second measure was the arrival of Col. Gen. KRUGLOV, at the time Deputy People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, USSR. It was rumored that KRUGLOV had received personal instructions from STALIN and BERIA.

5. KRUGLOV arrived in September 1944, and called a meeting which was attended by SNECHKUS, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Lithuania; BARTASHUNAS; chiefs of all the operational sectors; regimental and divisional commanders of the various units; reconnaissance chiefs of the various units; all deputy commanders for political affairs in the units; and personnel of the NKVD territorial organs in Lithuania.

At the meeting Col. Gen. KRUGLOV summarized the anti-partisan action. He then directed a few sarcastic remarks at SNECHKUS, BARTASHUNAS, the leaders of the NKVD territorial organs, and the unit commanders, and criticized them for the manner in which they conducted the operations. He added that STALIN, himself, was extremely dissatisfied with the results.

The main points of KRUGLOV's address were as follows: "Time has come for action. We must clean out each and every bandit base. These bases are to be found in every kulak farm, in each well-to-do farmstead. All the intelligentsia are to be considered bandits. Families and relatives of bandits, all those who have rendered aid to the bandits, anyone having any tie with the bandits - all are to be considered as being bandit bases. They must all be seized and deported to far-off areas of the Soviet Union."

KRUGLOV directed that intelligence be strengthened and broadened. More agents were to be recruited and the intelligence net was to be widened in the underground "bandit" areas. Agents were to establish contact with families and relatives of partisans. Any and all methods of recruitment were to be used - money payments, threats, deceit, appeals to patriotism, compromise, etc. All agents were to be well-trained. No sympathy was to be shown to the "bandits", their contacts, relatives, or any members of the underground. Any questioning methods could be used as long as accurate and valuable information was obtained.

He ended his speech by saying that "I am confident that this honorable and responsible task will be successfully concluded. Then the Soviet system will be established on Lithuanian soil, and the 'banditry' will be completely ended. Then normal everyday conditions will be restored for the Communist Party to be able to carry out its work in Lithuania."

50X1 Source learned of this meeting from Col. SKORODUMOV; from the Chief of Staff of the 95th Border Guards Det., Lt. Col. PISHKIN; and from the Deputy CO for Political Affairs of the 95th Border Guards Det., Lt. Col. KARNAUKHOV. These three officers had attended the meeting.

6. Following the meeting, KRUGLOV issued orders to alert all military organizations in Lithuania and to begin searches of all woods, swamps, and uninhabited areas. All underground headquarters, bunkers, storehouses, and hiding places were to be vigorously engaged and destroyed.

He also ordered that anyone who ran during a search of populated areas was to be considered a bandit and fired upon. Whenever anyone ran into a building during the search, the building was to be burned even if it meant burning the whole settlement. All livestock and property of those captured was to be turned over to local representatives of the territorial Party organs.

7. The commanders returned to their units and prepared for action. Large scale hunts were started, resulting in mass shootings of innocent

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Lithuanian citizens. Officers of the NKVD territorial organs used inhuman measures in questioning the populace. People were beaten over the head with pistols, rifle butts, cleaning rods, rubber-covered springs, clubs, fists, whips - anything to produce information.

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Although a great amount of Source's knowledge on the treatment of the Lithuanians was hearsay [redacted], he did see a few instances of brutality. These were in August or September 1944 in Dyshishkes (N 54-12, E 25-00), [redacted] in this area searching for a large partisan band. The unit CP was in a home in Eisiskes, and the upper floor was occupied by an unknown NKVD colonel who was in charge of the particular operational sector. The colonel had five or six operational officers in his headquarters who were charged with the collection of data on partisan activities.

In a house across the street, these NKVD officers had established detention cells (Kamera Predvaritel'nogo zaklyucheniya) for the purpose of questioning suspects. The house was surrounded by an electrified fence and was guarded by trenches and MG emplacements manned by a Border Guard unit of 35-40 men under a Sr. Lt. YATSKOV. The NKVD colonel used the house for detaining and interrogating anyone that his operational officers brought to him.

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Whenever the operational officers had an arrest to make, [redacted] komendatura provided one or two squads of men, who would return to the komendatura hq. with the suspect. The NKVD colonel would then order the suspect confined to the detention cells. If no information was forthcoming, the person was brought to the colonel's rooms on the upper floor of the CP. Here the suspect was questioned by the colonel; if he refused to talk, he was beaten by the colonel or one of the operational officers. Source observed these beatings on several occasions. The victims would lose consciousness and were often beaten to the point where they lost control of normal bodily functions.

In tribute to the stubbornness of the Lithuanians, Source stated that there were no instances of any information being given during these interrogations. After it was established that no information was forthcoming, the suspect was sent to Vil'nyus for further questioning. Source did not know the ultimate fate of these persons, but believed that they were sent to concentration camps. Once arrested, they could not be released for fear that the methods used by the Communists would be divulged.

Individual farms and separated settlements were burned and the livestock rounded up, mostly to be eaten by troops participating in the searches. There were also wholesale deportations of Lithuanian citizens to remote portions of the northern USSR for logging work. Political activists were imprisoned in camps.

The Lithuanians suffered but did not give up. Taking into account the great annihilation of civilians, mass arrests, exiles, tortures, and destruction of farms and villages, the partisan leaders decided to go underground temporarily and slacken their resistance, saving their strength for the future. Thus, the Soviet government established its authority in the Lithuanian SSR.

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8. Source gave the following information on methods of operation of Soviet units in Lithuania. He could give information only on operations in [redacted] Since the operations took place several years ago, he was able to give only general highlights.

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[redacted]e 95th Border Guard Det., was sent to Lithuania in July 1944 from the Crimea, where they had participated in resettlement of ethnic groups. Source was informed verbally [redacted] that the unit's mission was to liquidate the "bandit" or partisan movement, which had grown to alarming proportions.

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The unit arrived by rail and bivouacked in tents not far from Vil'nyus. Other NKVD units and Border Guard detachments (see subpara 1a and 1b,

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above) arrived in Lithuania about the same time.

ordered by BARTASHUNAS to attach one komendatura to an NKVD colonel who was chief of one of the operational sectors south of Vil'nyus. the 4th Komendatura, 95th Border Guard Det., was selected. He reported to the NKVD colonel at a small unknown settlement in August 1944. The troops were bivouacked in the woods just outside the settlement.

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For the next two weeks, the unit followed up leads on partisan hideouts. The troops would take up positions five yards apart in a line of skirmishers and move through an area while the officers formed in back of the line and controlled the forward movement. At dusk they would camp in place, and move out again at dawn. This continued until an entire area was cleared. In the two weeks, not a single partisan was killed or captured.

The NKVD colonel then told Source that his biggest worry was partisan activity in the Eyshishkes area, so the 4th Komendatura Hq. was set up in that town. Other komendaturas from the 95th Border Guard Det. took up positions in the surrounding area. Source was informed that the biggest problem to the Soviets was a group of "bandits" led by a man nicknamed "The Iron Wolf". The entire 95th Border Guard Det. took part in the search for this group. The area to be covered was quite large and contained many dense forests and swamps. The entire operation lasted about one month and included many minor skirmishes. Whenever possible, the partisans avoided battle. To complete a thorough search of the area, other Border Guard Detachments in the vicinity (exact ones unknown) had to be called in.

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During this search, komendatura lost a master sergeant and a sergeant. The master sergeant was instantly killed by rifle fire and the sergeant was critically wounded. These were the only casualties In the entire 95th Border Guard Det., Source knew of one lieutenant from Det. Hq., three EM from the 1st Komendatura, and three EM from the 3rd Komendatura being killed. These casualties covered a period from July 1944 to February 1945. Source was unable to estimate the number of wounded. He was not able to give losses of any other Soviet units, or any estimate of partisan losses.

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Source was finally informed by the NKVD colonel that "The Iron Wolf" had been killed in a minor skirmish. He also heard this from other officers in the 95th Border Guard Det., but believed that it was highly possible that the story was faked to pacify Moscow.

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Source claimed that the search of settled areas was conducted by Operational Troops and the NKVD territorial organs. participated mainly in the search for "The Iron Wolf"; consequently he did not know any activities in other areas of Lithuania, except for what he learned by hearsay. He had heard of robbery, rape, and plundering by the NKVD territorial organs, and of entire families being sent to distant parts of the USSR. However, he could give no specific numbers nor relate any incidents. He maintained that he knew of these occurrences from general knowledge, rumor, and contacts because of his rank.

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Babushkin, near Moscow. During the [illegible]
ania, partisan activity was still continuing but had decreased greatly. He knew only the following details.

9. In the Prenay forests near Kaunas, a search was organized in 1950 for a partisan leader named MESHKENIS. Source heard that MESHKENIS had been operating as a partisan leader from 1946 to 1950 and that he had received two years of US intelligence training and was parachuted into Lithuania. Gen. KRUGLOV was responsible for the search. Source heard

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that MESHKENIS had been killed, but there were two versions to the story:

a. MESHKENIS had a meeting with a liaison officer at the edge of a forest. Unknown to MESHKENIS, the officer was an MGB agent, and the area was encircled by NKVD troops. The partisan leader did not fully trust the liaison officer and had come armed with a grenade and pistol. He pulled the pin on the grenade, and warned the officer that he would be killed if the meeting was a trick. They walked about the area conversing, until MESHKENIS accidentally stepped on the hand of a hidden soldier. The soldier fired at him immediately, hitting him in the leg. MESHKENIS then killed himself with the hand grenade.

b. In the second version, MESHKENIS was in a small village restaurant just outside of Kaunas. Someone saw him and reported to the MGB, which encircled the restaurant. MESHKENIS then killed himself.

O. Source knew of a partisan band that operated in the Kalvaria-Mariyampol' area from 1946 to 1951, led by a man named SKIRMONTASS. Source estimated that this group had 21-25 men in 1946 and about nine men in 1951.3

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1. Comment: As of July 1954, SUSLOV was Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

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3. Comment: comment: Source was extremely cautious to refrain from implicating himself or his unit in any acts of violence that he reported. Such acts were always committed by the NKVD territorial organs. He admitted troops were guilty of killing livestock for their own use or of stealing intoxicating beverages from the Lithuanian peasants, but insisted that this was the extent of their unorthodox methods during the searches.

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